

REMARKS

By final Office Action mailed December 15, 2004, pending claims 1, 5, 11-16 and 18 stand allowed and pending claims 3, 4, 6-9, 17 and 19-25 stand rejected, reconsideration of which is respectfully requested in view of the above amendments and following remarks. Claims 3, 4 and 17 have been cancelled. Claim 6 has been amended. Claims 1, 5-9, 11-16 and 18-25 are now pending.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank the Examiner for noting the allowability of the subject matter of pending claims 1, 5, 11-16 and 18. In view of the Examiner's comments and suggestions, Applicants have (1) cancelled claims 3, 4 and 17, and (2) amended claim 6 to depend from claim 1 or claim 5. Accordingly, Applicants submit that pending independent claim 1, and corresponding dependent claims 5-9, 11-16 and 18-25, are now in condition for allowance.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §112, First Paragraph

Claims 3-4 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, for the reasons set forth on page 2 of the Office Action. In order to expedite allowance of the remaining claims, Applicants have cancelled claims 3-4 and 17 without prejudice to the prosecution of the cancelled subject matter in one or more related applications. Accordingly, this ground of rejection has been obviated.

Objection to Claims 6-9 and 19-25

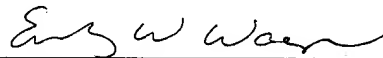
The Examiner has objected to claims 6-9 and 19-25 as being dependent upon rejected base claims 3-4. As set forth above, Applicants have amended claim 6, from which claims 7-9 and 19-25 depend, to depend from claim 1 or claim 5. Accordingly, Applicants request that this objection be withdrawn.

In view of the above remarks, allowance of claims 1, 5-9, 11-16 and 18-25 is respectfully requested. A good faith effort has been made to place this application in condition for allowance. However, should any further issue require attention prior to allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at (206) 622-4900 to resolve the same. Furthermore, the Commissioner is authorized to charge any additional fees due by way of this Amendment, or credit any overpayment, to our Deposit Account No. 19-1090.

Respectfully submitted,

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